



VERMONT VETERANS' HOME

April 8, 2021

Ms. Donna Jerry
Green Mountain Care Board
100 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Ms. Jerry,

The Vermont Veterans' Home (VVH) is submitting a letter of intent for our A-Wing demolition and rebuild project.

The Vermont Veterans' Home is an agency of the State of Vermont and is located on 84 acres in Bennington, VT. VVH is a 140,000 square foot, one level, 130-bed skilled nursing and 8 bed resident care level III facility. The facility has 5 “neighborhoods”; four for nursing home beds and one for the residential care beds. Founded in 1884 VVH cares for Veterans, their spouses/widows and gold star parents. The facility is licensed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Veterans Administration (VA). The care and services provided are covered by Medicare, Medicaid, the VA, commercial insurances, and private pay. Since the inception of this facility various sections have been demolished, added, or remodeled to meet the changing needs of our residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has identified additional infrastructure changes that must take place to mitigate the risk of infectious diseases. For that reason VVH need to demolish and rebuild a section of our facility currently referred to as “Awing”.

An important lesson learned during the COVID-19 pandemic is that building design has a significant impact on the ability of viruses or diseases to spread within the confines of a nursing home community. The Vermont Veterans' Home desires to reconstruct a section of the building that is not conducive to fighting the rapid spread of viruses and disease because of its outdated design. It is our largest residential area A-Wing (neighborhood), and it has substantial shortfalls. Examples include shared rooms and bathrooms, lack of adequate space in common areas and dining rooms, lack of secure outdoor safe areas, insufficient storage for resident assistive devices and personal protective equipment, outdated communications systems, and an inability to effectively isolate rooms or sections of the unit. The space proposed for reconstruction includes comprehensive area of approximately 44,750 square feet, including 32,000 square feet of basement and/or mechanical space. The existing construction dates to 1985 and has not been substantially renovated or improved except for localized cosmetic work and geothermal HVAC installation performed approximately 12 years ago. Desired in the reconstructed neighborhood is

a design that enables the ability to secure and isolate residential segments when a virus like COVID-19, or an annual event such as norovirus or influenza is occurring in the community. Being able to limit access will reduce individual contact and limit the spread to other residents and visitors of the Home.

The reconstruction must have the ability to reduce or eliminate through traffic in any isolated segments, to include meal and laundry deliveries, custodial and housekeeping activities, and staff traveling to their assigned work areas. Adequate secure storage will be required for enhanced PPE inventory required, as well as other items often found in hallways and common areas of nursing homes. **The minimum design requirements include:**

- A mixture of private and semi-private residential rooms, including private bathrooms (sink and toilet) for each room, sufficient to accommodate a total of 48 residents, current resident capacity for this neighborhood. Interior design will follow existing “small-house” design guidelines wherever possible, to include separation into segments of not more than 12-16 residents per segment. Each room shall have the capability to isolate HVAC systems to reduce airborne transmission of pathogens. All segments shall have sufficient amenities to isolate from other segments when necessary.
- Provide unit manager offices, medical provider space, treatment rooms, medication rooms, clean and soiled utility, medical supply storage, activities and dining utility rooms, basic kitchenette areas, localized (segment) dining, housekeeping, and custodial storage. Secure storage for PPE, medical and linen supplies, shared equipment, mobility devices.
- Ability to deliver meals, laundry, and other commodities through isolated route when required.
- Ability for staff and visitors to travel through isolated route when required.
- Outdoor courtyards for resident use that can be secured.
- Right sized dining and common area within each segment to use when isolation is required.
- Communal dining area for use when appropriate and for events.
- Mobile medical information, communications, and medication areas within each segment during periods requiring isolation.
- Primary hub nurses station designed to prohibit clustering of individuals. Central area includes nurse manager office, conference room, medical treatment room, and other functions necessary for central operation.
- Two-story central atrium with high wall glazing and skylights to promote natural light prominent in the design.
- Ancillary uses such as staff offices, maintenance, and laundry space necessary for essential functions.

As emphasized in the beginning, a crucial lesson learned during COVID-19 is building design has a major impact on the ability of a veteran’s home to care for America’s most vulnerable. A

redesign and rebuild of this resident neighborhood at the Vermont Veterans Home is critical to the health and wellbeing of these American Heroes.

This project will cost \$10,859,470.00. This project is 100% funded by a Veterans Administration State Home Construction Grant. There is no State funding required.

Thank you for taking the time to review our request. I am available to answer any questions or concerns the Board may have about this request.

Sincerely,

Melissa A Jackson, MBA, FACHCA

Melissa A. Jackson, MBA, FACHCA
Chief Executive Officer